

Applying to become a Retail Partner



Who is the Rail Delivery Group?

The Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) was set up after privatisation in 1993, to bring together all train companies to preserve and enhance the benefits for passengers of Britain's national rail network.

In 2011, one of the recommendations made by the McNulty rail value for money report was that a leadership body be established to take responsibility for coordinating and leading on cross-industry initiatives. The Rail Delivery Group (RDG) was established in June 2011 by the major passenger and freight train operator groups and Network Rail to fulfil this role.

In 2013, the structure of RDG was formalised to ensure that it continued to receive the full commitment of key people and organisations from across the railway industry. This was achieved through the incorporation of a new membership condition into the licences of Network Rail and those passenger and freight operators that operate over the mainline network. In October 2016, the single name of Rail Delivery Group was adopted to describe ATOC and RDG.

In 2021, one recommendation of the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail was that elements of RDG's activity should sit within the remit of an arm's length body. In May 2022, Rail Partners was formed to continue advocacy and policy activities previously undertaken by RDG on behalf of members, in advance of RDG's transfer to Great British Railways.

Get in touch

If you have an interest in becoming a National Rail retailer and believe you have a viable retailing concept that can offer a great customer experience, please get in touch. We are always very interested to hear from individuals and organisations who have an interest in retailing our products and we would love to hear your ideas of how your retailing innovations can benefit our customers.

Initial discussions

Ultimately, we want you to succeed. If we think your organisation, your business model or your idea does not match with our retailing principles, exposes our systems or data to risk, or offers little or no customer benefit, we will tell you before you invest too much time or money in your proposal.

If between us we think that that your idea has merit, then we would arrange a series of face-to-face meetings to discuss your idea in more detail and to introduce you to people and processes you will need to interact with during your application, build, test and deployment stages. We will also explain our technology to you and the systems that you will need to connect into plus give you an overview to our data structures, and we will help you to

understand more about Rail Delivery Group and what is important to us and the Train Operating Companies we represent and the customers we serve.

Making a formal application

If after the initial discussions and the face-to-face meetings you still want to want to become a retailer, we will ask you to submit a formal proposal. Depending on the application you are making, there may also be a processing fee. Your applications should include your plans for compliance with our Standards as well as a Marketing and Promotions plan which should be based on a template that we can share with you. We will assess the content of your proposal and take up trade and banking references. Having made a more detailed assessment, we will provide feedback to you and arrange more face-to-face meetings. It is likely that we would want to also expect to visit you at your site.

Further technical meetings would also be held to consider what type of ticket issuing system and other systems you plan to use. Accreditation activity may also begin, although prior to starting, you will be expected to submit will a technical specification explaining the technologies you expect to adopt and the checks and controls you will put in place to support your retailing proposition.

Accreditation

The purpose of being accredited by Rail Delivery Group is to confirm that the relevant Standards are being met. Accreditation is granted by Rail Delivery Group on behalf of the Train Operating Companies. Before being granted a Licence, you will be expected to propose how you expect to meet the appropriate Standards for each of the methods of retailing you are proposing to adopt.

If it is felt that the standards will not be meet the authorisation will not be given. If this happens, we can provide details and offer reasonable guidance to how a reapplication might succeed. You should note that there may be additional costs if you re-apply. This would be to cover the costs of any additional work required to assess a reapplication.

If there is a significant interval between the refusal and reapplication, or a fundamental change of circumstances, then we may consider it to be a new application and accordingly charge a new application fee. Once the Licence has been granted, and the service has begun, we will confirm that you are compliant against the Standards.

If you do not achieve Accreditation, you can ask for reasonable guidance to the areas that need improvement. If you that fail to achieve Accreditation within a specified period, you may have your Authorisation withdrawn and the License revoked.

Pilot, Go-Live and Beyond

Being in Pilot will see you processing real transactions, albeit in a controlled environment, but your operation will be open to public traffic. During this period, we will track individual records from sale all the way through to final settlement. You cannot exit Pilot if there are major discrepancies that have not been resolved.

A satisfactory assessment for each Method of Retailing you intend to use will result in Accreditation of that Method of Retailing and you becoming an Accredited Agent. As an Accredited Agent, you would then be allowed to display the



National Rail Accreditation mark and you will be allowed to open your operation up to full capacity.

Don't expect that to be the end of our involvement though. We look for long term and collaborative relationship from our retailers and if you are willing to invest in becoming a National Rail licenced retailer we will work closely with you through the application process and all subsequent stages through Pilot, into Live and beyond.

Useful Reading

Guide to Accreditation

This [TIS Accreditation Guide](#) is an introduction to TIS accreditation. It describes the process and scope of TIS accreditation and directs the reader to more detailed documents that cover TIS processes and their accreditation requirements.

Industry Data

Train companies also create various types of data associated with the provision of their rail services, including fares, timetables and valid London terminals data. The Rail Settlement Plan service is authorised to make this data available under licence to third parties on behalf of the train companies, to promote rail travel and encourage the wider distribution of accurate and consistent rail travel information on an impartial basis.

There are more details about this service at <http://data.atoc.org/> where you can also request sample data.

Indicative High Level project plan

We have produced a high-level project plan in the Retailer Guidance section of this site that shows key tasks and indicative timescales for these tasks. The plan is meant to give you an idea or the sort of activities you need to plan for and the time you should allow for each task including lead times where relevant.

Frequently Asked Questions

We have complied a list of [Frequently Asked Questions](#) that we are regularly asked and that we think will help you in your decision making.

Accreditation Toolkit

We maintain an Accreditation Toolkit called ASSIST which is where we keep a whole host of documents including our Standards and technical specifications. We also keep examples of test scenarios. You will need to [apply for access to ASSIST](#) and once you have your log-on you can access through this link:

<https://www.rspaccreditation.org/landingPage.php>

How to get in Contact

You can get in contact by email:

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